

In the Claims:

Kindly cancel claims 14-26 without prejudice.

⌈ Please add the following new claims. ⌋

36. An isolated antibody which specifically binds against a matrix metalloproteinase (MMP) protein or a salt of said MMP protein, or a partial peptide of said MMP protein or a salt of said partial peptide, said matrix metalloproteinase protein or salt thereof comprising the following peptide fragments of SEQ ID No: 2: (a) Gly¹⁰⁹ to Arg¹¹⁹, (b) Pro¹⁷¹ to Gly¹⁷⁸, (c) Thr²²⁹ to Leu²⁴² and (d) Asp⁵³³ to Val⁶⁰⁷, said matrix metalloproteinase protein having a maximum molecular weight of approximately 69kDa and is a pro MMP-2 activating factor, said partial peptide or salt thereof comprising continuous antigenic amino acid residues of SEQ ID No: 2 which are characteristic of said MMP protein.

37. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein said matrix metalloproteinase protein or salt thereof further comprises the peptide fragment Ala⁵⁶⁴ to Phe⁵⁸⁷ of SEQ ID No: 2, said Ala⁵⁶⁴ to Phe⁵⁸⁷ fragment being located at or near the C-terminal of the protein.

38. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein said matrix metalloproteinase protein or salt thereof comprises the amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID No: 2.

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39. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein said matrix metalloproteinase protein or salt thereof is obtained by prokaryotic or eukaryotic expression of an exogenous DNA sequence.

40. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein the pro MMP-2 activating factor is one which is capable of converting pro-matrix metalloproteinase 2 from its latent form to its active form.

mb 41. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein the antibody specifically binds against said partial peptide or salt thereof.

B² 42. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein the antibody is polyclonal.

43. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein the antibody is monoclonal.

44. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein the antibody is labeled.

mb 45. A method for producing the antibody according to claim 36, said method comprising employing an antigen selected from the group consisting of said matrix metalloproteinase (MMP) protein, said salt of said MMP protein, said partial peptide of said MMP protein and said salt of said partial peptide, to produce the antibody thereagainst.

46. A method for producing the antibody according to claim 43, said method comprising

immunizing an animal with an antigen selected from the group consisting of said matrix metalloproteinase (MMP) protein, said salt of said MMP protein, said partial peptide of said MMP protein and said salt of said partial peptide, to obtain an antibody-producing cell which produces an antibody which specifically binds to said antigen,

fusing said antibody-producing cell with an immortal cell, and

selecting an immortal hybrid cell which produces the monoclonal antibody according to

claim 43.

47. A method for detecting and/or measuring a matrix metalloproteinase protein, said method comprising using the antibody according to claim 36.

48. The antibody according to claim 44, wherein the antibody is used for detecting and/or measuring said matrix metalloproteinase protein or salt thereof.

49. The antibody according to claim 36, wherein said partial peptide or salt thereof comprises SEQ ID NO: 5, 6, 7 or 8.

50. The antibody according to claim 49, wherein said partial peptide or salt thereof is selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOS: 5, 6, 7 and 8.